

Matthew 28:1-10

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Preacher: David Moser

[0 : 00] A.W. Tozer once wrote, The account of Jesus' life is the only biography known to man that does not end with a death and burial.

! It's hard to overstate the importance of this passage. The Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15 that the entire Christian faith rests on the empty tomb of Jesus Christ.

If Christ isn't risen, we go home. The only reason we're here, the only reason I know you, the only reason we believe that that gravesite over there isn't the end of the story, is because we believe that 2,000 years ago, a man walked out of his tomb.

This is the central fact of history. The biggest news story of all time. It is the vindication of Jesus Christ.

It is the victory of the church. It is the promise of glory. And it is the foundation of our hope.

[1 : 29] So let's look at what the Apostle Paul called the working of God's great might, that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead.

So let's pray and then let's consider the empty tomb of our risen Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, as we tread on holy ground, we ask that you would open our eyes to see.

Jesus, our risen Lord, our Savior, and our God. Lord, would you stoke a passion for his name in us? Would you quell our fears because of his victory? Would you stoke our joy so that we might be complete in him?

We pray this in the name above all names, Jesus Christ. Amen. The first thing I expect the most obvious thing about this passage is that it's not normal, right?

[2 : 46] People don't just rise from the dead. But that's just what the guards at the tomb saw, what the women as they came found.

And I think, like, friends, this isn't normal. But if you've been in church your whole life, maybe this is just like, yeah, I know.

I've heard that story. Friends, this doesn't happen. This needs to strike us as incredible. I feel that we, and I know that I, often do not appreciate the resurrection, the empty tomb, enough.

We're not, oh, amazed by it often enough, or deep enough, that, friends, our King rose from the grave.

Amen? Amen. Every once in a while, I get a reminder that this is something so spectacular, so out of the ordinary.

[4 : 00] My wife teaches English as a second language. Right now, she teaches it to children. In the past, she's taught it to adults in various contexts. One of the ways she's done it in the past is online.

That's before coronavirus got everybody used to being on Zoom all the time. Once, she told me a story that really excited me. She was teaching English as a second language to a student in a country that is closely closed to the gospel.

As she was teaching English, one of the things you do is just have a conversation, just to practice what you're doing. Sometimes it's a grammar lesson, but sometimes it's just conversational English to get comfortable with the language.

And so they were talking about their families and their lives, and the topic came to religion.

Foreigners are actually often much more ready to talk about religion than Americans, is what it is.

And so they were talking about religion, and he had never heard the story of Jesus, ever. And as she was telling him, yeah, this is what Christians believe, she told him about the death of Jesus Christ in our place, and how he was buried.

[5 : 15] And then she got to the resurrection. And she said, and he rose from the grave on the third day, and he was so blown away. And it took her aback.

he he's he's turning it up to 11 here right in john chapter 7 he said i lay down my life that i may take it up again no one takes it from me but i lay it down of my own accord i have authority to lay it down and i have authority to take it up again which is harder to heal the lame that's pretty hard or to raise the dead well he did both and which is harder still to raise the dead or to take up your own life after you've died jesus did both and then he did both and then he did both and then he did both and then he did both and then he did validated by this event his empty tomb everything he taught everything he modeled for us all of it is true and good and empowered by the same spirit which rose him up in victory and and and when he asked me what i did for a living and he found out that i was a pastor the conversation turned to spiritual things he said that he admired jesus but he didn't think he was the only way to connect with god and so i i asked him you know so you probably don't like that whole i am the way the truth and the life no one comes to the father but by me this right and he didn't i i said to him if the tomb is empty you have to listen to him he paused for a moment i don't really remember exactly how he replied but he he on the one hand didn't want to acknowledge it but on the other hand couldn't really say anything back against it right because if the tomb is empty you do have to listen to him and so from his first teaching repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand to the sermon on the mount to the missionary sermon of chapter 10 to his condemnation of religious hypocrisy in chapter 23 that was a fun chapter right you have to listen to him if the tomb is empty and i like how one pastor put it he said it proved him to be that is the empty tomb proved him to be a prophet a miracle worker and it threw back his authenticating light on everything he said and did during his earthly ministry and just a side note friends you know uh for me that that conversation that evangelist conversation that happens when people find out that i'm a pastor like oh immediately you know when someone says what do you do and i say i'm a pastor like that's a pretty easy entry into spiritual things it's also something that shuts people off pretty quick too but you know it's it's neither here nor there um there's a way for you to have that easy entry point too um all you have to do when someone says what do you do you can say hey i work at ev or i um you know i'm in the coast

[17:50] guard whatever whatever it is that you do i'm a stay-at-home parent um all you have to do is say i'm that and i help out with kids at church or i do that and i'm involved with faith to faith or what do you do i do this and whatever it is that you're involved it should be involved at church right and then you have that easy entry point where you can say hey i do this and here's a spiritually important thing in my life and that immediately opens doors for you to ask questions or for you to go off into that right so no excuse be involved in church and now you have an evangelistic opening go forth and do that's a great thing so the tomb is empty this is totally unique the empty tomb is a victory unlike any other in it is the source of our joy and the empty tomb means that we have to listen to him and if we pay attention because jesus shows up in this passage we'll learn something else even more when jesus greets the women in verses 9 and 10 he says almost the same exact thing the angel has said right the angel says do not be afraid jesus says do not be afraid the angel says he is not here for he is risen amen it's amazing right and jesus shows himself outside the tomb he's not there and very much alive he is risen the angel says go quickly tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead and behold he is going before you to galilee there you will see him and jesus likewise says to the women to tell the disciples to go to galilee and there they will see you know it's thought for thought nearly word for word except there's this interesting wrinkle the angel calls the 12 his disciples jesus calls them my brothers the angel says that's no small change right the language that jesus uses for his disciples after his resurrection has changed here he calls them brothers john chapter 20 he calls them brothers he calls them children later in john chapter 20 he says i am ascending to my father and your father father and your father and your father suddenly they are not servants anymore suddenly they're family this is a change and friends the good news of the gospel is that god makes us family the cross and the empty tomb sin and death conquered have made it possible for the king to draw us near into his home into his heart the cross and the kingdom of the king to draw us into his heart which brings us every blessing in christ jesus communion with god right that is fellowship with him today that is in prayer and in his word and then among his people and on that day face to face and an inheritance with christ with which the scriptures don't really explain to us i think

probably because we don't have the capacity to really get it and it means that we are bound to him which is so so good it has myriad applications but because this passage is about a grave let's think about what it means to be as we approach our grave and we are all approaching our grave what

We're living for life beyond death and for the one who made that possible. One writer put it this way, no situation is hopeless while Christ lives.

No situation is hopeless while Christ lives, and he lives forever, friends. And I'll extend that, right?

No loss in your life or grief or wound or sorrow is final. Terrible as it may be.

No loss is final while Jesus lives. And no person is a lost cause while Jesus lives.

[30 : 20] And no scar is too deep while Jesus lives. And friends, he lives forever. Here we see, as we come to Matthew 28, that Jesus has conquered the grave.

Even life's ultimate wound, death itself, is no more for those who are found in Christ Jesus. So let us, like the Marys here, run to him and grab hold of him and worship him and find life.

And let us serve our brothers and sisters in Christ. Let us be happy to report, to remind, to recall the empty tomb.

Because there our king is vindicated. And our hope is guaranteed. And our life is secure. And our joy is complete.

Friends, so much depends on the empty tomb. And it is empty.

[31 : 48] If the tomb is empty, you have to listen to him. If the tomb is empty, do not be afraid. If the tomb is empty, his enemies are defeated.

If it's empty, death is not the last word. And the kingdoms of this world bow to this king. And if the tomb is empty, friends, tell your brothers and your sisters in Christ.

So much depends on the tomb being empty. Literally, it is the center and the sum and the substance of the Christian worldview. And so that question comes to us.

Are we sure? Are we certain that it is empty? You might recall, if you were here with us last week, that Christ's enemies said, at the end of chapter 27, verse 64, that an empty tomb would be worse for their cause than his whole life in teaching.

And so they're going to, next week, as we enter into verse 11, give it their best shot. And obviously, their shots have been pretty good as of late.

[32 : 57] They got him crucified. They're going to give it their best shot to discredit this. To discredit the empty tomb. To prove, don't bother coming here.

Right? Are we sure it's empty? Are you sure it's empty? That is what Matthew is going to direct our attention to next week.

So that everything we have said today about the resurrected Christ will sit firmly in our hearts. So that we will have a sure and certain hope.

And the foundation of Jesus Christ, our resurrected King, with whom we will live forever. Let's pray.

Our God and Father, thank you that you have raised Christ from the dead.

Will that never grow old for us? Will you excite our hearts to passion for his name because of it? Will it reframe the entirety of our lives?

[34 : 16] Lord, may we live for his kingdom first and always. Will you remind us that because he's risen, we have to listen to him?

Will it reframe the way we look at loss and grief and sorrow? And Lord, will you prompt us to serve our brothers and sisters in Christ?

Lord, by reminding, pointing us to each other, to the empty tomb.

Saying he is risen. He is risen in the faith. We pray these things in his name. For the sake of his glory. Amen.

Friends, let's now join together and sing.